

## [The Howes]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (CHECK ONE)

PUB. WE WORK ON THE WPA

TITLE THE HOWES

WRITER JANE K. LEARY

DATE JULY 27, 1939 WDS. PP. [?]

CHECKER

SOURCES GIVEN (?)

COMMENTS

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The Howes

Name: Jane E. Leary, 32 Acorn St., Lynn.

Assignment: "We work on the W. P. A.

"No Mr. Howe ain't home. He's workin' ya know. He'll be home at one, but then he's got to go in an' see what he kin do fur his mother. She's sick. She' dyin' really. But She's goin' on 81.

"I got all I kin do up here takin' care a my family. I got 'leven an I'm only 39. They come every year or every other year anyway and from the way Dr. ————talks, him that

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brought all 'leven of' em in the world and me too, I got four more comin'. They kin tall ya know, from the knots in the cords. Four more. Oh! My God, I hope not. Not on \$14. a week.

"But we got money comin'. When she dies downstairs, we'll get something. She's got money, and my husban's her only child. But I've had lots a trouble with her. People with only one child always thinks no one's good enough fur 'em. An' I never got along with her.

"Why the last two I had, she even went an' told people they din't belong to my husban'. I told him an' he said, 'What's the difference, long as you know whose they are. An' I said, 'Yes, but I sure hate ta be walkin' the streets with a big belly and wondering if the neighbors believe what she says.'

"An' ya oughta see the rows a canned goods she's got on her shelves. But would she bring me up a coupla cans 2 a soup when she knowed the children din't even have a bite ta eat. Not her. As long as I lived here, she never as much as give 'em a crust a bread. An' they all the flesh an' blood she's got besides her son, for he's her only child.

"Why I seen her go out in the back yard an' hand a orange over the fence to some neighbor's child, an' my children 'ould be right down there in the yard.

"No. I can't say I'm sorry she's so sick. She's been too mean ta me. Why once she sent fur the riot squad when my children wuz out on the porch and the policemen come up and come in both doors at once an' I wuz goin' ta have a baby like I always wuz and I went dead away right there on the floor.

"We had a hard time of it, with me always going ta have a baby or else just getting over havin' one. We wuz married when I wuz jest sixteen and we kept it a scret fur awhile but when she found it out down she went to City Hall an' found out the date wuz in September. An' then she kept watchin' the time 'till I had my first baby and it wuzn't till the next September so she wuz fooled.

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"My husband wuz goin' off ta war then an' he wuz away fur three months after we wuz married. My mother-in-law cun't see why he'd a married me unless he had too, an' that's why she watched. But I didn't get that way, 'till he come back.

"But I din't know nothin' and when I told my mother I wuz sick in the morning' she told me I better go to the doctor an' he would tell me what wuz the matter with me. I din't even know how a baby come.

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But he wuz a fine doctor. They don't come no better. I wun't have no one else. He always said I wuz a good soldier for I din't make no fuss when mine come. I always had a natural birth though but the labor wuz long enough.

"When I wuz gonna have the first, I din't have ta lift my hand while I wuz carryin' it. We wuz livin' with my mother then. No, an' the first three or four wuzn't so bad. 'taint nothin' ta have three or four children. Ya ought ta have 'leven. That's no fun.

" I wuz always sick the whole time I wuz carryin' them. But seems as if the worse time of all wuz when I wuz carryin' the one that is five years old now. From the way I acted up, he'd [oughta?] be a devil but ya know he's the meekest an' mildest of the bunch.

"It wuz jest about two weeks before I was goin' ta have him, an' the gas an' electric wuz turned off, an' I din't even have a bed ta sleep in. Well I got dressed an said I wuz goin' down town. An' I went ta see Father——, him that wuz hard a hearin'. As I went in the door, I saw one of them Chritmas wreaths with a candle in the middle of it, an' when I got in inside I told him jest how it wuz.

"'Father', I said, 'I'm agonna have another baby in about two weeks, an I ain't got no clothes fur it, an' none fur me ta be sick in, and no bed ta have it in, an' the gas an' electric is turned off, an' we ain't got a stove that'll work. "Well, sir, do you know what he said

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ta me. He said, 'What do you want me to do about it? Do you want me to make you a layette?'

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"I wuz so mad I din't know what I wuz sayin'. So I up an' said, 'Father —, here I been a good Catholic fur all these years, an' I lived with my man like they say ya oughta an' now ya say that ta me. Well I'll tell you what you can do, you can take your money an' put it up your —. I said that to him an' he got up and said I wuz in a state and had better go out a side way.

"'I'll go out the way I come in', I told him. And I did too an' I banged the door so that candle fell down off the wreath an' I din't care.

"I walked home. But when I got here, I just couldn't hold myself so I said I wuz goin' ta take a walk an' I walked up ta Floatin' Bridge and I stood there lookin' at the water. There wuz some friends a mine seen me go, and they wuz afraid a what I'd do, so they called the cops. Pretty soon two of 'em got out a auto and walked up ta me.

"'Come on, now', they said, you better come home. Come on, we'll drive you home.!

"'Let me alone,' I told them. I ain't doin' nothin' an' I ain't gonna do nothin'. I jest wanta stand here awhile.

"'But they din't go an' after awhile I got in the car an' they brought me home. But I don't really think I'da done anything if they hadn't come.

"The next day my husban' wuz goin down town and who did he meet but Father—. 'say,' said Father—ta my husban', 'Your wife is in quite a state, ain't she? Well now you tell her that I ordered a ton of coal for her this mornin' and that I'm on my way now to get that gas and electric turned on, an' I've bought her a stove, and I'll pay her way in the hospital if she wants it.

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"I really wuz a devil while I wuz carryin' that child. Another time I put on my hat an' went down town. I din't have a nickel in my pocket fur my husban' wuz only makin' \$12. a week then and he wuz givin' \$5. a week ta his mother fur rent. I went down to Joe——at the Welfare an' I told him.

"I 'm tired a havin' my kids hungry.' I said. 'What ya goin' ta do about it?'

"He looked at me—he's a fine man, an' he said, 'Ya don't have any rent ta pay, do ya?

I told him how we wuz givin' her the \$5. a week fur rent whether we had food enough or not an' she had money an' my son wuz her only child.

"He reached in his pocket an said, ' You didn't have no breakfast this mornin', did you?'

"I didn't bother,' I told him.

"Now here,' he said, and he handed me fifty cents and told me to go across the street an' get some breakfast, an' then ta go home an' ta tell my husband ta come down to see him by three o'clock that afternoon or he'd send a man up ta get him.

"I wuz afraid ta tell my husband myself so I called on the telephone across the street from where we lived and told them to tell my huband that they wanted him down at City Hall at three o'clock that afternoon. He came, an wuz he mad at me?

" Joe ——told him that if he heard that he give his mother another cent a rent when she had plenty, he'd see to it that he was arrested for cruel and abusive treatment to his children. An' from that time on, except when my husband wuz off the W.P.A. and makin' more money, he didn't give her no rent.

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When my last two wuz born I didn't tell no one, I wuz ashamed to, kinda. Ya know down at the Catholic Charities they tell ya your not supposed ta have children if you're on the W.P.A. An' in the church they tell ya you're not supposed to do anything about it. An' they say you're supposed ta live with your man. Now what's a woman gonna do? Everytime I had one, I'd say I wuz goin' ta do something about the next one but when the time come I backed out. I never lost none of 'em either. They wuz all big healthy babies, nine an' ten pounds. Seems as everything I did get ta eat went ta them.

"An' all my children are huskies too. I fed 'em lots a milk an vegetables an' bread. Lots a times we didn't get meat but they liked the bread and vegetables. They're all huskies.

I got one son nineteen. He's just come home from the C C Cs and what a difference in a boy. When he went he had the idea that everybody wuz pickin' on him an' I was scared he'd get in with the wrong crowd. He'd wanta go to a show an' I wun't have the money fur him or ta buy him a pack a cigarettes an' ya know how it is. Now he's home an' how he changed. Don't go round lookin' fur a crowd ta rob somebody's pear tree or something.

And I can't go round followin' after 'leven. So I wuz glad fur the CCC. An' now I got another boy. He's seventeen and he kin go in September. But he's no trouble ta me. I'm aspeakin' the truth when I say that boy ain't been no trouble ta me since he wuz born. But his brother now; he's sixteen. If he wuz seventeen I'd shoe him off ta the camp tomorrow an' see if that would make a man a him.

I got a girl eighteen. I sent her down ta see Mr.—this morning ta see if he cun't put her on the N. Y. U.

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And I sent the boy out ta the G. E. ta see if he cun't get on someway.

But thing'll be better someday. When she dies, my husban's gonna sell this place. He kin got \$1500 fur it an' then we're gonna got a cottage with a bath room in it. 'taint no fun living

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the way we do. Do ya see them big holes in the wall of the hall. I've been gonna get paper fur this hall an' green curtains fur the parlor fur a year an' I ain't got 'em yet. All we get has gotta go to the grocer. When he gets his \$28. we owe the grocer \$30.

The only thing that makes me hold on is because my husban' is so good. He takes care a all the bills. I never have ta worry about goin' ta see the grocer an' everyone that comes collectin' bills. He sees ta that. An' he don't go an' spend his whole pay fur drink. Once in a while if he earns an exta dollar an' a half; he gives me the dollar an' goes an' spends the fifty cents playin' cards hopin' ta get more. But I don't say nothin'. I know a man's gotta have some faults.

"The doctor that takes care a me when I have the babies don't think that though. He gets mad as hell. My sisters went and put their nose in our business and told him. He thinks he oughta give that fifty cents to me. But I don't begrudge him that.

We'll be all right when my mother-in-law dies. She's dyin' now, I guess an' I ain't sorry. My children goes down stairs sometimes an' gives her chunks a ice and does things fur her an' my husban' goes in every afternoon when he comes home from work.

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He loves her, for a course, she's his mother.

That's natural.

But I'd be a hypocrite if I'd say I wuz sorry when she breathes her last. An' I ain't no hypocrite.

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